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ABSTRACT

This publication discusses the nongraded primary education block mandated by the Kentucky General Assembly to take effect during the 1992-93 school year. In particular, the publication considers the framework for the implementation of the nongraded program in a central Kentucky cluster of school districts. An overview of the history of public education provides a rationale for nongraded primary education. In the development of the nongraded primary education program, the unique characteristics of primary students, teachers' beliefs about how children learn, and the desired learning outcomes for students were considered. The program addressed the topics of: (1) developmentally appropriate practices, including integrated curriculum and instruction; (2) multi-age classrooms; (3) continuous progress; (4) authenticity of assessment; (5) qualitative reporting methods; (6) teamwork among teachers; (7) parent and community involvement; (8) use of school facilities; and (9) periodic evaluation of outcomes. The 3- to 5-year implementation of the program in individual school districts will involve the phases of orientation, planning, training, and adjustment. A planning format for implementing the program is included. A glossary of relevant terms and a bibliography of 19 items are also provided. (BC)

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PRIMARY EDUCATION: *A FRAMEWORK*

CENTRAL KENTUCKY CLUSTER
OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION
FISCAL AGENT

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INTRODUCTION

The primary education block (grades kindergarten through three) mandated by the 1990 Kentucky General Assembly takes effect during the 1992-93 school year. It is understood that the program must begin in every elementary school in Kentucky at this time and that it may be phased-in over the next several years.

The school districts comprising the Franklin County Primary Education cluster chose to participate in a program established by the Kentucky Department of Education to develop models for training school personnel and parents to plan and implement primary education programs.

As a prelude to a training model the cluster of school districts developed a framework for a primary education program. The framework provides a foundation for a program, standards for an effective program, program concepts, and planning and implementation strategies.

A primary education program supported by the framework can begin to be implemented during the 1991-92 school year. A phased program is recommended and is a concept that has influenced this framework. A fully implemented non-graded primary block will be phased-in over a period of from three to five years. Phasing, planning and implementing programs will accommodate the need to gradually adjust the curriculum, to gain support of parents, and to train teachers and administrators.

Those who have been responsible for developing this framework accept the fact that a non-graded program without continuous progress teaching would not produce the desired student success. Therefore, it can be assumed that continuous progress is an integral part of a primary program.

It is further acknowledged that each school will need the freedom to make decisions about how to best serve its student population. School districts and schools included in this project, while sharing some common interests and needs, are also different and must make decisions accordingly.

This framework is designed to accommodate the differences in districts and schools within each district. It is just that - a framework. It offers goals, concepts, and strategy options from which districts and schools can choose or implementation plans are made. It defines non-graded and continuous progress in concept and strategies that can be implemented in different forms.

This framework was also designed to assist participating school districts in developing their own primary block program, giving direction to the type of

training needed for educators and parents, and assisting school districts and schools with implementation of a program.

A training model has been developed from the framework and is presented in a separate document. It describes the focus of the training, how it is packaged in training modules, and how it will be delivered to principals, teachers, and parents.

RATIONALE FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION

Eliminating a grade structure at the primary level and implementing a student-centered continuous progress approach to delivering instruction is a holistic approach. Such an effort will considerably effect the philosophy of teaching, school organization, assignment of students, teaching strategies, curriculum, student assessment, instructional planning and management, and parental involvement.

Public education as we know it today was begun in the mid-eighteen hundreds by Horace Mann. At that time a grade structure (first to eighth) offered a logical system for delivering and managing public education. For years, schools were small comprising a multi-age, multi-grade student population with peer coaching and continuous progress learning. By necessity, students helped students, students learned from students, and teachers grouped students for instruction based on needs and interests. The curriculum was narrow when compared to today's curriculum. The three R's were the core of the curriculum. Students were educated for rural America. Religion and family values were emphasized.

As schools became larger and society became more complex, the grade structure and such practices as student promotion and retention became limiting rather than enhancing factors. In short, the grade structure and many accompanying educational practices became obsolete when effectiveness was considered.

Students who failed to meet teacher expectations were retained to repeat in many cases the same textbook and learning experiences which during the first experiences produced little or no success. In these situations, students are held back for a full year with no opportunity to advance to the next grade during the school year. Retention of this type produces a negative self-concept and causes students to always be a grade behind his/her original classmates.

The same system also caused students who were academically and socially behind their peers to be promoted to the next grade, only to be faced with even more difficult material and higher teacher expectations resulting in students becoming further behind their classmates. Public education as we have known it for the past several decades was not designed to accommodate the individual differences of children and youth.

The one year (175 instructional days) one grade theory assumes all students have the same abilities and learning rate. Teachers who set only one performance standard for a lesson, provide all students the same experience and give all students the same work sheet, home work assignment, and test, assume all students are basically equal in abilities, achievement, and rate of learning.

Textbooks throughout history have served as the primary instructional system. Teachers who use textbooks in this manner will in most cases have all students on the same page. Again, assuming they all are ready to learn and can learn at the same rate and level.

Under these conditions, some students are destined to fail and others are not challenged to learn to their maximum abilities. In both cases, the system of education has failed the students more than the students failed on their own.

A non-graded and continuous progress primary education program makes it possible for the individual needs and interests of all children to be met. Educators generally agree that it takes some students longer to develop a skill or knowledge base than others.

Dr. Benjamin Bloom has stated, "All children can learn, it just takes some children longer than others."

The main advantage of nongradedness lies in its being "more consistent with the fact that there are individual differences between human beings," says Robert Anderson.

When grade barriers are removed and continuous progress teaching strategies are used, each student is given the time and opportunity to learn at a rate that produces success.

Retention can be eliminated and thus avoid the stigma of being a failure and "social" promotion can be avoided which prevents students from cumulating deficiencies.

Nongraded primary classrooms also offer an appropriate social atmosphere. Children learn to communicate, cooperate, listen, set goals, share and respect each others thoughts and actions by working as peer coaches and in cooperative groups.

The traditional use of the textbook is no longer applicable. Students who are working at their own rate cannot possibly be working on the same page. Therefore, teachers use a variety of materials and activities and match such materials and activities to the learning styles and activities of children.

Assessing letter grades as a means of reporting student progress is another practice which operates on the assumption that all children are similar. The practice has

been based on the teachers setting one standard for all students to meet to make an "A."

In non-graded primary education each student will be working toward his/her own performance standards which require a reporting concept different from letter grades. A more detailed narrative description of student progress is used as a means of keeping parents informed.

The traditional graded structure is out in the primary school because some children would be assured of failure. A non-graded system is in because all students have an opportunity to learn to their maximum ability and rate and to feel good about themselves and school.

FOUNDATION

The development and implementation of a primary education program meets all the characteristics of designing and operating a total school. In fact, a primary school becomes a school within an elementary school. Why a total school concept? Every component comprising a school must be addressed: students, curriculum, instruction, staffing, materials, media, scheduling, organizational structure leadership, facilities, and philosophy.

It is this holistic approach to planning and implementing a program which will contribute most to the potential success of the program.

Efforts to improve public education in the past have, at best, resulted in modest improvement. Such programs as open schools, team teaching, "new math" behavioral modification, and process curriculum were jointly promoted by educators, policy makers, and parents but were never considered as more than a project. Also, each one was fragmented in such a way that only teaching strategies, curriculum, or materials and media were effected rather than having all aspects of the school effected.

Eliminating a grade structure at the primary level and implementing a student-centered continuous progress approach to delivering education in a holistic manner will assure successful school improvements.

A holistic approach to educational change requires commitment from teachers, principals, parents, and the Board of Education. The need for such commitment becomes real when a non-graded primary program is considered.

The focus is on people working collaboratively on committees and school councils to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate a holistic program for primary students.

It is the human interaction that will produce ownership, commitment, and sound decisions which are the ingredients needed for success.

The process begins with development of a foundation for a primary education program. The foundation will support all organizational, leadership, program, and service concepts included in the primary program.

The following information will comprise the educational and philosophical foundation:

- **Characteristics of Primary Students** – a description of the natural behaviors of children ages five to eight which have a direct effect on what and how we should teach. The program begins with an understanding of children served by the primary school.
- **Beliefs** – what teachers believe about how children learn and how they should be taught. This helps define what a school should do to adequately serve children ages five to eight.
- **Learner Goals** -- outcomes demonstrated by children after having spent approximately four years in a primary program. They will be used in developing curriculum, selecting instructional strategies, and establishing student assessment procedures. All student activities provided by the school should relate to one or more of these goals.

Developing a foundation for a primary education program is the first step in the process of implementing a primary program and was the first step taken in development of this framework.

All other components in this framework have been built on the foundation.

A. Characteristics of Primary Students

Children are born learning. Infants and children are eager to acquire all the skills necessary to relate successfully to their environment.

Studies of human growth and development by Piaget, Bloom and others, reveal that there are certain behaviors that can be expected from children at different levels of maturation. These behaviors are consistent enough with the chronological age of children, youth and adults to be called natural. For example, a five-year old child will be very dependent upon parents while a nine-year old child will choose to do many things on his/her own.

J. M. Hunt, as early as 1961, argued that it was no longer defensible to hold that intelligence is fixed and develops only in accordance with a predetermined genetic code. He revealed evidence that supports the theory that the environment is an

important determinant in the intellectual functioning of the individual. This theory relates to an individual's intellect but could be broadened to encompass attitudes, values, beliefs and interests.

While there is a natural sequence of behavior that can be predicted at different levels of maturation, there are also those behaviors that are unpredictable, called conditioned behaviors. These may be defined as those behaviors that result from environmental and cultural influences.

It should be emphasized that, while it is possible to predict natural behaviors by level of maturation, it is not possible to predict behaviors for each person at any given age simply because of the difference in rates of maturity of different individuals. A five-year old child may be as mature physically, mentally and emotionally as a seven-year old due to experience and innate ability as well as the many influencing factors that may prevail. This, of course, is one primary reason for a non-graded school.

It is evident that it is difficult to completely differentiate between natural and conditioned behavior. The natural behaviors are those that can be predicted at different maturation levels and may be discussed as characteristics, needs and interests, while those that are categorized as conditioned behaviors are unpredictable and result, primarily, from environmental and cultural influences. It is theorized that the environmental and cultural factors surrounding a student, as well as his/her innate ability, contribute significantly to his/her behavior. For example, a five to six-year old student is dominated by his perceptions and not his/her thought processes so that when a magician creates a rabbit out of nothing, he/she believes it. This is a natural behavior according to Piaget and it can be predicted. Yet, there are exceptional five to six-year old students who do not demonstrate the same use of some thought processes and would question the appearance of the rabbit. This more advanced behavior is conditioned behavior.

This section of the plan focuses on the natural behaviors of the primary student (ages 5-8). A description of the characteristics, needs and interests of students at different maturation levels is provided in order to acquire a more thorough knowledge of the individuality of students.

This information will be used in developing the curriculum and instructional strategies for the non-graded primary block.

Information on the characteristics of students include physical, attitudinal, mental, emotional and social behaviors expected of students ages five to eight.

These are some of the characteristics they exhibit:

- They are self-centered.
- They need attention and recognition.
- They are highly imitative of grown-up behavior, competitive, possessive, self-assertive, boastful and talkative.

- They express emotional tension by screeching and loud talking rather than by crying.
- They rebel at punishment before others.
- They tend to fight with words rather than blows.
- They show caution, are self-critical and anxious to do things well.
- They begin *some* serious, thoughtful self-evaluation.
- They have difficulty in making decisions and choices.
- They show shyness and fear in strange surroundings.
- They seem progressively more able to plan and evaluate with others.
- They like to play alone or in small groups, but interest in larger group activities increases rapidly.
- The interests of boys and girls diverge and there is little play together as they participate in gangs and groups.
- They have a keen sense of loyalty and are concerned about right and wrong as they perceive it.
- They show pride in family, in accomplishments and in good behavior.
- They are sensitive to harsh criticism and tears are near the surface.
- They are careless and unable to consistently meet the standards of adult expectations.
- They are money conscious.
- They have many types of fears.
- They are acquiring a sense of humor.
- They are learning to control their emotions.
- They have a great interest in dramatics and acting.
- The girls are maturing more rapidly than the boys.
- They are growing rapidly, from 1 to 3 inches annually.
- They are constantly active whether sitting or standing.
- Their eyes are not sufficiently developed to read fine print.
- They tire easily because their heart and lungs are still small.
- Their finger muscle coordination is not well developed and they are awkward in performing fine motor tasks.
- Their handedness is already established and should not be changed.

Benjamin S. Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives has been used to classify the needs of students for greater clarity. Each need has been classified as either (1) cognitive, which are those that are related to thinking, knowing, performing and problem-solving; (2) affective, which are those that relate to attitudes, values, interests, appreciation and social-emotional adjustments; (3) psychomotor needs, which relate directly to manual and motor skills.

The interests of students presented are those things they want to accomplish and/or in which they want to participate. The information offered is more nonacademic than academic. However, it is recognized that interest can be very academic. This area of the individuality of students is pursued because of the belief that the natural inquisitiveness and independence of students should be accommodated in planning and implementing educational programs.

Affective Needs

Primary students need:

- Success
- Limited responsibility
- Sharing attitude
- Feeling of security
- Self-confidence
- Freedom from undue pressure
- Expression of feelings
- Follow directions
- Self-directions
- Awareness of others
- Individual recognition
- Group and individual identity
- Adult approval
- Know "right" from "wrong"
- Answers to their questions
- Know real from imaginary
- Outlet for questions
- Physical self-expression
- Verbal self-expression
- Little competition
- Feeling of acceptance
- Some structure
- Sexual roles identified
- Interaction with adults
- Adult models
- Freedom of choice
- Support from family

Cognitive Needs

- Oral expression skills
- Develop concept of symbols
- Develop concept of classifications
- Vocabulary improvement
- Listening skills
- Differentiate between the living and non-living
- Knowledge of social rules
- Inquire
- Explore
- Creative expression
- Aware of physical world
- Manipulate concepts by thought
- Sequencing skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Develop concept of number operations
- Recognition of oral and pictorial meanings
- Visual discrimination and recognition
- Auditory discrimination and recognition
- Kinesthetic and tactile participation
- Writing skills
- Reading skills
- Speaking skills
- Define words and phrases
- Historical knowledge
- Knowledge of environment
- Knowledge of health and nutrition

Psychomotor Needs

- Eye-hand coordination
- Foot-eye coordination
- Small muscle coordination
- Large muscle coordination
- Rhythmic response
- Physical development
- Manual dexterity
- Physical balance
- Physical fitness
- Correct posture

Interest

- Self
- Animals
- Role playing
- Toys
- Learning something new
- Television/movies
- Music
- Games
- Creating things
- Nature
- Fantasy
- Confrontation

B. Learner Goals

The non-graded primary program will be designed to meet the following learner goals:

- Students will demonstrate an interest in learning and will use all skills taught to further educational progress.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to read, write, speak, compute in situations both in school and out which indicates their understanding and mastery of these skills at a level which allows them to interact successfully with both peers and adults.
- Students will demonstrate problem-solving skills in all areas of instruction and will relate such skills to practical living experiences.
- Students will demonstrate independence of thought and behavior through self-discipline and self-respect.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of responsibility to family, peers, and community.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to think abstractly, organize and classify, and will relate such thought processes to life situations.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to make connections between all experience and all instruction.

- Students will demonstrate a preference for a healthy lifestyle and will engage in appropriate physical activities.
- Students will demonstrate the social skills of cooperation and interactions with peers and adults.
- Students will demonstrate awareness of the needs, values, and differences of peers and members of the community.
- Students will demonstrate a knowledge of cultural heritage and diversity.

C. Beliefs

The participating school districts believe that students are unique individuals and that they develop and learn at different rates and by different methods. Further, primary students progress at various rates but are similar in many natural behaviors, similar enough for teachers to be able to teach students of varying chronological ages in the same classroom or group.

It is recognized that children are emotional and social beings with unique personalities and they come from diverse cultural backgrounds. They develop and refine their thinking and attitudes as they interact and communicate with other children and adults.

It is believed that heterogeneous grouping is more educationally sound than purely homogeneous grouping. Further, homogeneous grouping of students who have a common specific need is a sound strategy within the heterogeneous grouping.

More specifically we believe that all primary-age children:

- (1) Can and will learn, however, the rate may vary.
- (2) Have a desire to learn.
- (3) Can be successful.
- (4) Should reach their greatest potential.
- (5) Will learn best by being actively involved in learning.
- (6) Will learn from each other.

We believe that all primary-age children should have a developmentally appropriate curriculum and that this curriculum will include academic, integration, and process skills, which includes problem solving and decision making skills.

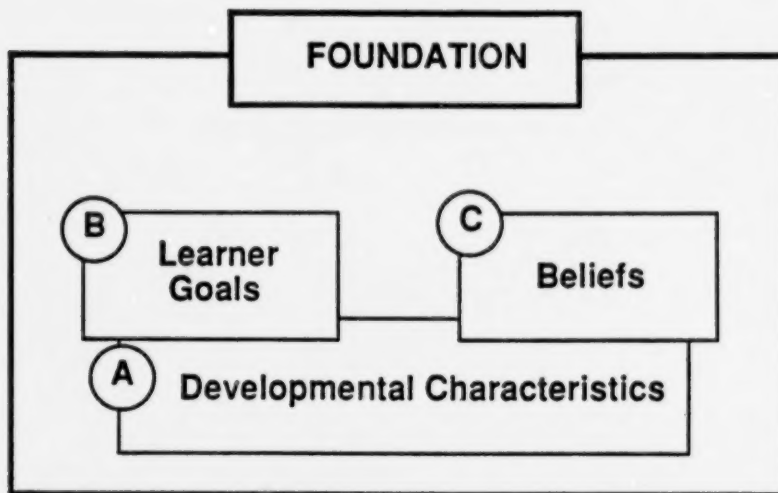
We believe that primary-age students should reach an appropriate skill level as determined by performance standards set by the state.

We believe we must offer each child a safe, comfortable, child-centered environment which is conducive to learning.

We believe that family, school, and community are an integral part of this environment.

We believe that student assessment should be aligned with the curriculum and the philosophy of the program, motivational for students, and used by teachers for planning for instructions.

We believe that failure is detrimental to learning and that children must experience success to learn.



CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

An appropriate primary program for all children recognizes that children grow and develop as a "whole," not one dimension at a time or at the same rate in each dimension. Therefore, instructional practices should address social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, as well as cognitive needs. The primary program flows naturally from preschool programs and exhibits developmentally appropriate educational practices. These practices allow children to experience success while progressing according to unique learning needs and also enable them to move toward attainment of the educational goals and capacities of the Kentucky Education Reform Act in an environment which fosters a love of learning. The critical attributes, outlines below, are the foundation on which our primary school is to be built.

With justification from the literature, model successful programs, information from the Kentucky Department of Education, and the professional experience of the

planning committee, the participating school districts have adopted the following critical attributes primary education program.

These attributes have influenced the development of both the framework and the training model and will be used by each elementary school to develop and implement a primary program. Each school and district will work toward reaching these attributes but will have flexibility in how they are met. Accompanying each attribute are descriptors which can be used to help assess to what extent these attributes have been met.

1. Developmentally Appropriate Education Practices
 - a. Integrated curriculum
 - b. Active child involvement, interaction, and exploration
 - c. Multi-sensory materials
 - d. Balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities
 - e. Varied instructional strategies and approaches such as whole language, cooperative learning, peer coaching/tutoring, thematic instruction, projects, learning center, independent learning activities and holistic teaching
 - f. Flexible groupings and regroupings for instruction based on interest, learning style, problem solving, skill instruction (short term) reinforcement, random, etc.
 - g. Teaching for transfer
 - h. Use of "real" life learning experiences.
2. Multi-Age/Multi-Ability Classrooms
 - a. Heterogeneous grouping
 - b. Flexible age ranges
 - c. Family groupings
 - d. Homebase concept (homeroom type place).
3. Continuous Progress
 - a. Students progress at own rate as determined by authentic assessment
 - b. Promotes social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, cognitive development
 - c. Success oriented
 - d. Non-competitive
 - e. Documentation of pupil progress through anecdotal records, observations, portfolios, journals, videotapes, computer disks, etc.
 - f. Non-retention/Non-promotion.
4. Authentic Assessment
 - a. Occurs continually in context of classroom involvement
 - b. Reflects actual learning experiences
 - c. Emphasizes conferencing, observing, examining multiple and varied work samples, etc.

- d. Documents social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, and cognitive development
 - e. Use performance-based assessment.
5. Qualitative Reporting Methods
- a. Descriptive, narrative, ongoing
 - b. Reflects a continuum of skills for pupil progress
 - c. Varied formats such as portfolios, journals, videotapes, narratives, etc.
6. Professional Teamwork
- a. Securing regular time for planning/sharing
 - b. Varied instructional delivery systems such as team teaching, collaborative teaching, peer coaching, etc.
 - c. Regular communication among all professional staff (PE, Music, Art, Special Education, Gifted, Chapter I, etc.)
7. Positive Parent/Community Involvement
- a. Home/school partnerships
 - b. School/community partnerships
 - c. Continuous information exchange
 - d. Train parents on primary education.
8. Schools facilities are utilized in a way that supports a primary education program:
- a. Use of library facilities
 - b. Use of instructional space
 - c. Assignment of student families
 - d. Use of special areas of the facility.
9. Outcomes of the primary program are periodically evaluated and reported to the faculty, parents, and Board of Education:
- a. Define educational productivity factors
 - b. Use learner goals for measuring progress
 - c. Consider state standards of performance for primary students
 - d. Use an objective measurement system
 - e. Report results

PRIMARY PROGRAM

The program for the primary block is described in this section of the framework. It is presented by critical attribute.

Each attribute has program concepts which when implemented will help schools successfully install a primary education program. The concepts are general and

allow for flexibility. For example, all schools will implement continuous progress concepts but may differ appreciably in how they do it.

Phasing-in the program is another issue addressed in this section of the framework. Each school is encouraged to phase-in the primary program over a three to five year period, and to do so at a rate that is manageable by the respective schools. In addition, planning is encouraged and supported by this framework.

The program takes into consideration that each child is a unique person with individual characteristics. A program is needed which is responsive to these differences and allows children to advance at their own pace while assuring all children they can and will advance. To accomplish this, the program must address curriculum, instructional strategies, parental involvement, student assessment, and reporting how students are assigned within the program.

A. ATTRIBUTE ONE: Developmentally appropriate educational practices.

1. Integrated Curriculum

The curriculum will be integrated so learning occurs mainly through projects, learning centers and activities which reflect the current interests of the children. Skills are taught as needed to complete projects at a high level of proficiency.

Individual children or small groups are expected to work and play cooperatively or alone in learning centers and on projects they select themselves or are guided to by the teacher. Activity centers are changed frequently so children have new things to do. Teachers and children together select and develop projects. Frequent visits and outings are planned. Peer tutoring and coaching as well as learning from others through conversation while at work or play occurs daily.

Children have many opportunities daily to develop social skills such as cooperating, helping negotiating, and talking with the person involved to solve interpersonal problems. Teachers facilitate the development of social skills at all times as part of the curriculum.

Curriculum will include such skill strands as math, science, reading, writing, social studies, art, music and physical education. The curriculum will begin as rather traditional and over a five year period will become primarily thematic. An effort will be made to relate what is being taught to a current need and/or interest of children. At the point the curriculum is integrated, skills will be taught at the time students have a desire to use them. They will not be taught in total isolation of each other.

Students need experiences which will enable them to make connections between what is being taught and "real" life experiences. Students who connect and integrate new knowledge with knowledge they have acquired previously and with life

experience will remember what they have learned longer and will be more able to transfer it to a variety of situations.

An example of integrating the curriculum is a whole language approach. Such an approach integrates spelling, writing, reading, and literature.

There is a need to show students how different subject areas influence their lives, and it is critical students see the strength of each discipline perspective in a connected way.

If transfer of knowledge and skills is to occur, students must have experiences which cut across skill strands.

2. Instruction

The primary block includes a continuous progress instructional system. Children will work at their own pace and will not be held back or will advance on the basis of group performance. A diagnostic-prescriptive approach to reaching certain skills will be used by teachers.

Teachers will be observant and use whatever measurements of progress they need to determine the level on which each child is functioning and be ready to move that child on into tasks which require further learning as soon as the student demonstrates mastery.

Like thematic teaching, continuous progress will be phased in beginning with one skill strand the first year and expanding as schools are prepared to expand.

a. Teaching Strategies

Teachers will use a variety of strategies that will keep the instructional program focused on the individual student.

The skill needs of each student will be diagnosed by each strand.

Records of progress on each student will be maintained. It will first be by written records and then by computerized systems.

Students will progress by levels of skill.

b. Thematic Teaching

Thematic teaching is another method of integrating the curriculum.

Teachers will select a central core of content such as social studies and will teach reading, math, art, music, etc. in relationship to the theme. Some activities will be

project-oriented requiring students to work as a team (in some cases students will work individually on projects).

The product will be reported to the class by such means as visuals, role playing, demonstration, question and answer, and presentations.

Thematic teaching will begin the first year on a small scale and will continue to build throughout the five year implementation period. The first year it may be that one theme is used every six weeks and activated weekly, while by the end of the third to fifth year, thematic teaching could be used every day for certain skill strands.

c. Textbooks

Textbooks as a primary instructional system will be gradually reduced to a resource for teaching. Use of thematic teaching techniques will lead to a shift in how textbooks are used. Textbooks will come to be used by students as resource materials rather than as a sole-source. Teachers will rely much less on the textbook materials and much more on the student's initiative to locate information and material relevant to whatever project is being undertaken. Writing skills may be enhanced in student's efforts to obtain information. Letters to sources for materials will be written. Development of skills requiring an understanding of time can be strengthened by noting the dates and times of performances or films which will provide the information the student is seeking.

Teachers will not be expected to eliminate their textbooks the first year, but will begin to discover less need for them on a lesson-by-lesson basis.

d. Integrated Skills

All literacy skills, reading, writing, and speaking, will be directed to the need to communicate about something being addressed by the group of which the student is a member. Students will write because they will be communicating to other students who will read what they write. They will learn to speak clearly and in an organized manner because they will need to have their peers understand what they are saying in order to communicate information about the project on which they are all working. Mathematics skills will be important because weighing, measuring, and computing, will be important to products generated by students.

e. Experienced-Based Instruction

At the upper stage of implementation of a primary program, there will be little to no "seatwork" done in isolation of each other. Instead, there will be groups working on projects in which it is necessary to observe, to classify, to relate, to describe, to examine, to taste, to feel, to hear, to touch, to contract, etc. As the student work through their projects, they will have had many experiences allowing the

manipulation of materials and from each of these experiences will have come learning.

It will be the experience of the child which will produce learning and not what the teacher has said or demonstrated.

f. Special Programs

Such programs as gifted and talented, Chapter 1, art, music, and special education will be incorporated into the curriculum through the "inclusion" concept. At the point basic teachers plan and teach collaboratively, special teachers will become involved with the teams. Special teachers will work within the "families." The pull out program will be eliminated in the primary program as personnel are adequately trained.

g. Teaching for Transfer

The focus of instruction in the primary program is on function. It is important that students begin to think in terms of problem-solving and transfer. Students will understand that if a principle works here, it may work in another situation which is similar. They will begin to look for relationships between situations in order to apply the knowledge they have acquired. Teaching for transfer necessitates teaching at the higher order of thinking-evaluation, analysis, and synthesis.

Infused in the curriculum will be such skills as creative thinking, problem-solving, critical thinking, decision making, and meta cognition.

The process of problem-solving contains the most universal set of thinking skills and information processing skills a student will need to be successful in life. Benefits of critical thinking, problem-solving, etc., include success in school, in the work place, and in personal life.

h. Social Skills

Social skills will be integrated into the curriculum in much the same way as thinking skills. The ability to interact productively and to work toward common goals will be important to family and work success. Such skills as cooperation, team work, respect, and goal attainment will be included in the curriculum.

i. Variety of Teaching Techniques

Skills in such skill strands as math, reading, science and language will be organized in individual continuum of skills for the purposes of diagnosing, monitoring progress, practice, and reporting of progress.

Such skills continuum will also aid in making decisions about how to group students for instruction.

Students will be taught in large groups with direct teaching methods and in small groups with both teacher and student assistance.

Cooperative learning techniques will be used to teach social and academic skills.

Students will be re-grouped periodically on the basis of a specific skill need.

All students can be working in a group on the same skill strand simultaneously or one group can be working while other students are working at learning centers individually or in teams.

Manipulative materials, experiences of what is being taught, and multi-media instruction will be used to capture the interest and inquisitiveness of the students.

The use of the textbook will be gradually reduced from major dependency as an instruction system to a resource book.

Homebase teachers will be responsible for teaching certain skills in the homebase room when the family organization goes into effect.

j. Sequencing Skills

All skills will be taught in a logical and sequential order. A skills continuum will be developed and used in planning and monitoring the implementation of the curriculum. Student progress will be related to the skills continuum. The teacher(s) will help students work through a sequence of skills to the mastery level. The continua will be flexible in that the sequence of skills can be altered by a single teacher or group of teachers. Consideration will be given to both lateral and vertical instruction.

B. ATTRIBUTE TWO: Multi-age/Multi-ability Classrooms

1. Student Assignment

Classes should be formed using methods designed to insure that no class, even by accident, receives more than its share of the same age, sex, race, ability, socioeconomic status, or special needs children. This is generally not accomplished by a total random selection process. Random selection from pools of similar children will serve well but random selection from the total student pool may aggregate more children of the same characteristics than is wise.

Schools may begin by assigning students to classrooms or families by two ages the first year, allowing one age overlap (i.e., six to seven, seven to eight) then move to

three and four ages the second or third year. If it is best for students to remain in a group with two ages, it will be encouraged.

2. Homebase

A school may begin with self-contained classes the first year and expand to the family concept the second or third year. First, establish a family of students with two homebase teachers and then go to a family of students with three homebase teachers. Each group of students will have a homebase. It will be his/her primary location in the school. He/she will begin and end each day at the homebase. Each group will have a homebase teacher to whom they report and who will teach them as well as other students when working as a family. Some skills will be taught exclusively by the homebase teacher. The homebase teacher will be responsible for attendance and other records on the student for whom she/he is responsible.

Once these groups are formed, care should be taken to encourage a "family" feeling and to keep the groups stable. These children should probably spend their entire primary time with each other and new children should be added as the older children move on. Individual circumstances could interrupt the family arrangement and parents, teachers, and school administrators should be involved in any decision to change a child's school "family."

Students should remain with the same teacher throughout their primary school experience; however, in the interest of a student's education, movement of students among classrooms and families will be permitted, but not encouraged.

C. ATTRIBUTE THREE: Continuous Progress

Students should understand from the beginning that everyone will succeed. Encouragement to try new experiences should be provided by the teacher to all students. The motivation of having older students modeling behavior for the younger ones encourages younger students to reach for achievement that schools have not before been expected. The motivation for older students of having the younger children regard them as models encourages them to reach for achievements beyond what has been the past norm.

There is no retention or promotion in this arrangement because learning is not measured in time blocks. Students continue to improve their skills at the primary level until their teachers determine they are ready to function in an education program outside of the primary block. Movement from the block can take place at any time the teachers agree that such a move is in the best interests of the child's education, confers with the child's parents about a new student assignment, and the student's performance meets the standards set by the state.

Students are not placed in a competitive situation in the primary school. There is great emphasis on cooperation in the solving of problems, finding information,

planning presentations, dividing tasks, and other social/managerial tasks when they work alone and/or cooperatively.

Because learning in the primary school is not discrete and divided into separate subject areas children have opportunities to learn social skills presently not available to them except as adjuncts to classroom situations. Emotional growth is aided by the opportunities for assisting others in the family in accomplishment of group goals.

The primary program is directed toward success. The expectations of everyone, teacher and pupils, are for success. All instructional arrangements are focused on having the children achieve at the upper limits of their present capabilities.

D. ATTRIBUTE FOUR: Authentic Assessment

Evaluation of these new teaching strategies and primary organization will be important to teachers and administrators as well as to the children and parents. New ways of evaluating student progress will need to be developed and implemented. When all children are not doing the same things at the same time, there is no logical way of comparing them to each other.

The system for reporting to parents will be consistent with the individualized student assessment system. A system of letter grade will no longer suffice. A report card will continue to be used, but in place of "A," "B," "C," etc., there will be a list of specific skills and a check to show how well the student is performing. A more narrative description of student progress will be utilized. Such a change in reporting procedures will require parent acceptance which will be obtained through parent training and involvement.

Other methods of assessing and reporting student progress will include:

- Samples of work completed by students (i.e., portfolios).
- Written statement done by the child of what he/she thinks he/she has learned, what has been the most interesting what he/she would like to learn during the next reporting period, etc.
- Videotape of students demonstrating academic and social skills at various points during the school year.
- Results of criterion-referenced tests, printed out, and shared with parents.
- Student, teacher and parent conferences.

There will be an expectation by the school that teachers will be able to determine how much or how little improvement is being made by the children under this instructional plan. It is necessary to the improvement of instruction that all parts of the new organization be examined and corrections, additions, deletions be made in the interests of improving instruction. Much work and planning by the teachers

and administrators of a school will need to go into determining the new evaluation and reporting system.

Pupil assessment in the primary program is not an approximation. It is done carefully, accurately and consistently by the teacher in on going observations of a students actual behavior and performance. Recording devices, audio or video, can be used as documentation but are not required. A teacher's detailed regular observations combined with a student's own products, i.e., journals, portfolios of his work, summary statements, etc. give parents and school an up-to-date synopsis of what is happening in the achievement of each child.

Further, assessment is not done or reported only at set time intervals such as six or nine weeks. Instead, it is constantly being recorded and is reported to parents as often as needed, but at least as frequently as designated by the school.

Assessment contains specific information about the learning experiences in which the children have been involved. It describes in various forms the actual performance a child demonstrates during instructional activities. The assessment should be documented in a preservable medium, but may be presented to parents in various ways such as conferences led by either teacher or student, in work samples produced by the student, indirect parent observation of student behaviors in the school setting or any other means which communicate to parents the development being made by the child in all areas; social, emotional, physical, esthetic, as well as cognitive.

E. ATTRIBUTE FIVE: Qualitative Reporting Methods

Regardless of the recipient of the assessment information, (parent, teachers, community, Board of Education, and State) reporting methods will be needed which convey clear, understandable delineations of the progress of students in the primary program.

Unless otherwise required by the state agency on specific forms, reporting methods should be designed to communicate student achievement in ways best understood by parents, community, and students.

Letter grades (A, B, C, etc.) will give way to more definitive methods that will more accurately reflect the progress of individual students.

The intent is to be as accurate as possible in reporting the social, academic, and physical progress of students while reporting in such a way all parties understand the status of the student.

Various formats may be used: narrative, skill checklist, student journals, portfolios, videotapes, and computer printouts.

Reporting should not be viewed as an event which will occur now and then, but a continual and ongoing process. Reporting should occur as it is needed. Teachers will schedule reporting throughout a grading period and possibly on a staggered basis so all reporting does not have to occur on the same day. For some students it may be wise to report more often than others. Reporting, like teaching, should be individualized to each student.

F. ATTRIBUTE SIX: Professional Teamwork

The primary program will require teachers to interact. They will be formed into collaborative teams to plan and deliver the instructional program.

Teachers assigned to families will collaboratively teach. In a family of sixty students, three teachers will plan and teach together. In one situation, it will be best for all teachers to teach all basic skills, while in another, it may be more effective for some teachers to specialize.

By the third year, each family of students will have one or more instructional assistants who will assist with record keeping, diagnosing student needs, drill and practice, assessments, coaching, and supervision of student movement.

The type of instruction which the primary program will require will necessitate cooperative planning among all teachers and reserve staff personnel. The principal must work closely with teaching teams to devise scheduling procedures which can provide at least a part of the time for planning which will be so crucial to the success of the program.

A generally accepted method of teacher indoctrination and training for the new approach to instruction needed for the primary program can be supplied by a well-implemented use of collaborative teaching. This will allow reciprocal teacher observation with the goal of improving performance in teachers who are unfamiliar with the teaching strategies required, and observation and conferencing skills among all teachers.

G. ATTRIBUTE SEVEN: Positive Parent/Community Involvement

Parent involvement is necessary for the primary program to be successful. First, parents must understand the program and its vast changes in curriculum and instruction in order to support it. Second, they must get involved with their children encouraging, communicating high expectations, modeling reading and computing, and promoting the value of education.

School need to develop new and innovative means of getting parents involved. An invitation in the traditional style will not attract parents who need to be involved.

Expectations should be communicated to parents. A plan for involving them should be developed. A set of activities that can be completed with their children should be developed and communicated to parents.

Parent training program on how children learn, and strategies they can use to support their child should be conducted throughout the school year.

As a strategy, parents should be used to promote parent programs and to network with each other

The different kinds of student assessment and reporting should make parent cooperation and assistance easier to obtain. Parents will be able to know with more certainty what their children can do and what kinds of help and encouragement they need to provide at home to enhance the efforts of the school.

The community will also become more involved in the primary program. Forming partnerships and providing a support system ranging from funding to field trip experiences is important to the success of the primary program.

H. ATTRIBUTE EIGHT: School Facilities are Utilized in a Way that Supports a Primary Education Program.

When families are formed, students will be located in the building so movement can be made with the greatest of ease.

For each family of students there will be an instructional resource room equipped with approximately ten computers, printers, and other equipment. Also, materials and media will be stored in this special facility. It will also serve as a reference room for students as they conduct research, view media, etc.

1. Library/Media Center

The library or media center will become the center of support for thematic teaching. The librarian will become a member of each planning team and will aid in identifying, selecting and providing printed materials, computer software, and media that will support teaching/learning themes. The library/media center will be decentralized so that materials and media will be assigned to each "family" for the time a theme is being studied. A facility within each family will be provided for storage and usage of materials and media.

2. Instructional Management System

By the fifth year of the program, a computerized instructional management system will be incorporated into the non-graded primary program. It will have the capability of diagnosing, monitoring, practicing, and reporting student progress in various skill strands.

Hardware and courseware/software will be available to each family of students.

I. ATTRIBUTE NINE: Outcomes of the Primary Program are Periodically Evaluated and Reported to the Faculty, Community and Board of Education.

As assessments of progress are made for individual students, it is important to curriculum development and modification that information be provided to all teachers concerning which activities were most, or least, effective in helping children develop specific skills. Longitudinal records which illustrate achievement over an extended period for groups of students are important so comparative assessments can be made concerning teaching techniques and strategies.

The process begins with the definition of educational productivity for the program. Included in the definition will be expected learner outcomes and a description of the data to be used to validate the productivity.

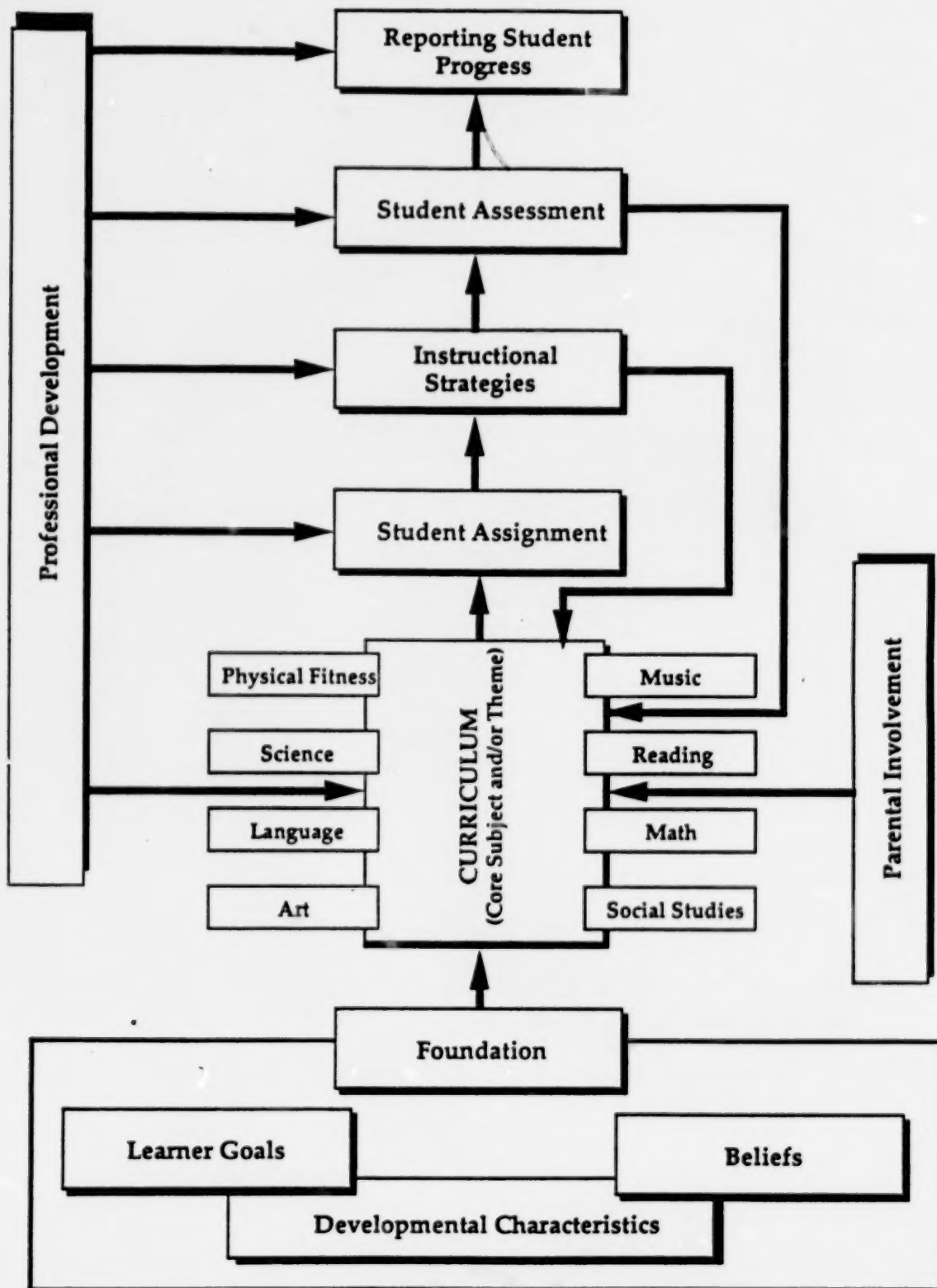
At a minimum, each school should have outcomes, a plan for reaching the outcomes, and a means of evaluating the outcomes and reporting the results.

The community expects and desires to know how well programs are working, especially when major changes are underway.

All sources of media and direct methods should be used to report to the community. The greater the communities understanding of primary education and program outcomes, the easier it is for change to occur.

Also, the Board of Education, as a representative body of the community, must be kept informed of all findings concerning the outcomes of the program. Information should be furnished frequently and presentations to the Board of this information should be made every year. More frequent reports should be provided at the request of the Board.

PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAM



PLANNING

Preparing for implementation is in four phases:

Phase 1: Orientation

Teachers, principals, parents, and others will be provided information that will become a knowledge base from which sound decisions can be made. They will become knowledgeable about the developmental characteristics of children ages five to eight, program concepts, implementation strategies, and change needed to have a student-centered primary school. Six to twelve hour of orientation training will be provided to teachers, parents and administrators. The objective will be to provide each party the knowledge needed to effectively plan.

Phase 2: Planning

Each school will develop a long-range (three to five years) for implementing a primary school. The framework will be used to support such planning. A committee or council at each school should be formed to complete all planning tasks. The entire faculty and parent leaders should have an opportunity to provide input.

A format for planning is included in this framework. Included in the plan will be a training component.

Phase 3: Training

Conduct training sessions for principals and teachers to prepare them for the activities to be implemented during the 1992-93 school year. The training should be skill specific and should support all activities to be implemented during the first year of the program. It should be noted that skill specific training will continue annually for from three to five years.

Phase 4: Program Adjustment

Implementation of the program will begin during the 1992-93 school year. With one year of experience, schools will know more about what will and will not work effectively. Responding only to the strategies used during the first year, changes in the program will be made based on the results of the experiences. Also, changes may be made in the long-range plan for implementing a primary program.

**PLANNING FORMAT
IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION**

YEAR ____1ST ____2ND ____3RD ____4TH ____5TH

SCHOOL YEAR _____

PROGRAM _____

DATE ADOPTED _____

1. BELIEFS

a. About How Students Learn

b. About How Teachers Should Teach

2. LEARNER GOALS

(WHAT WE EXPECT OUR STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO DO BY THE TIME THEY LEAVE THE PRIMARY BLOCK.)

3. STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

- a. Criteria for Homebase Group (size, ages, etc.)
- b. Group Formation Strategies

4. CURRICULUM

- a. What will be taught (content)
- b. Integrated Curriculum: General Strategies
- c. Thematic Teaching Strategies
- d. Other Curriculum Integration Program

5. CONTINUOUS PROGRESS

- a. Skill Strand(s)
- b. Diagnostic Procedures
- c. Instructional Strategies
- d. Student Assessment Procedures
- e. Reporting Procedures

6. TEACHING STRATEGIES

- a. Setting Priorities
- b. Re-grouping Strategies

c. Classroom Management

d. Materials Selection and Use

e. Use of Technology Strategies

7. TEACHER COLLABORATION

a. Planning

b. Teaching

c. Use of Special Teachers

8. STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND PROCEDURES

a. Assessment Procedures

- b. Reporting Procedures

9. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- a. Strategies for Informing Parents
- b. Strategies for Training Parents
- c. Strategies for getting Parents Involved

10. USE OF FACILITIES

- a. Strategies for Using Classroom Space
- b. Strategies for Using Library/Media Center
- c. Strategies for Using Special Facilities (Computer Lab, Gym, Music Room, etc.)

11. PROGRAM EVALUATION

a. Productivity Outcomes

b. Measurement Procedures

c. Reporting Procedures

12. OTHER PLANS

13. TIME LINE

Event/Activity/Task	Year				
	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97

GLOSSARY

1. **Continuous Progress** - Students move from one set of skills to another at his/her own pace. No student is held back or advanced due to the performance of other students. It is a process of teaching which requires a continuum of skills in hierarchical order, a diagnostic system to determine what level individual students are working on the continuum, a prescription system to give individual students the most appropriate experience and a method of measuring the progress of individual students.
2. **Experience-Based Teaching** - Teaching done on a base of experience. The experience of students past and present is used as the basis for learning something new. Students who are taught germination will plant seeds, observe the germination steps and experience the seed becoming a plant.
3. **Heterogeneous Grouping** - Students assigned to groups of students because of their differences (i.e., sex, race, achievement, and interest.)
4. **Homebase** - The location within the school regarded by the student as his/her specific "home." The place where his/her books are kept when he/she is not using them, where attendance is recorded for state required records, and where his/her "homebase teacher" is generally to be found.
5. **Homebase Teacher** - The teacher to whom the primary block students report first every morning, who records his/her attendance, who gives directions about what is to be done that day, where, and with whom. The teacher who a primary student regards as his/her "significant other" at school.
6. **Homogeneous Grouping** - Students assigned to groups of students because of their similarities (i.e., reading, test scores, math test scores, and physical size.)
7. **Integrated Curriculum** - Relating to thematic teaching, a method of instruction in which all parts of the curriculum are related in some fashion to all other parts. No skill area is taught in isolation, but all parts are taught in relation to some problem to be solved or information to be obtained.
8. **Non-Graded** - Students assigned to groups and taught without consideration to the number of years in school. With regard to non-graded primary block, there are no first, second and third grade students.

They are all in the centered block. They show evidence they are ready to move to the fourth grade or some higher block.

9. Retention - Leaving a student in the same grade classification as in the previous year rather than moving him/her on to a higher functioning level. Often done because a teacher feels the student needs time to "mature."
10. Skill Strand - A set of skills that are within the same domain of learning such as math, science, reading, art, and music.
11. Teacher Collaboration - Two or more teachers planning, teaching and supporting students jointly. They plan and conduct lessons together with common and agreed to roles and responsibilities.
12. Thematic Teaching - Use of a central theme on which to base total teaching for a period of time. Once the theme is identified, all lessons, projects, research, individual reading, etc. is directed toward obtaining information and understanding of the topic.
13. Authentic Assessment - An assessment of what we actually want students to be able to do or understand. Assessment which occurs in the context of normal classroom involvement and that which reflects the actual learning experience, i.e., portfolios, journals, observations, taped readings, videotaping, conferencing, etc. The tasks are frequently somewhat open-ended and judgement is required to evaluate the level of performance.
14. Performance Assessment - Assessment based on a child's actual performance within the context of the classroom as opposed to only tests or written assignments that may be quite different than the process a child used while learning the material.

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